

## Against the Grain

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Volume 29 | Issue 3

Article 64

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June 2017

# Straight Talk-The 12th Annual ER&L Conference

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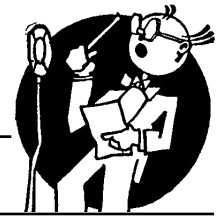
### Recommended Citation

Tonkery, Dan (2017) "Straight Talk-The 12th Annual ER&L Conference," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 29: Iss. 3, Article 64.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7803>

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# Straight Talk — The 12th Annual ER&L Conference April 2-5, Austin Texas



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In real estate the key is location, location and location. For professional library meetings while location is often a factor it is really content, content, and content that drives the attendees to resist and attend a particular meeting. In the case of the **ER&L Conference**, that content is the handiwork of **Elizabeth Winter** from **Georgia Tech** and her Program Planning Committee who year after year produce one of the best meetings for all aspects of electronic resources for both the library and the publishing communities. I do believe that part of the outstanding program content is due to having the same person as program chair. **Elizabeth** has been the Program Planning Chair since **ER&L's** beginning. Committee members come and go but the institutional knowledge is enriched each year and every year the content becomes stronger. It also helps in the planning phase to get input from the community and they vote on what they want to see. Brilliant!

It is hard to believe that the idea started by **Bonnie Tijerina** at **Georgia Tech** in 2006 would grow to nearly 1,000 attendees from all over the world. The meeting does not have any official society or membership group backing it; it is the work of **Bonnie** and **Sandy Tijerina** and their committees that come together each year to produce one of their outstanding library meetings. The **Charleston Conference** and **ER&L** are the two premier library meetings in the U.S. having long surpassed **ALA**, **ACRL**, and **NASIG** as the meetings to attend.

**ER&L** has a strong vendor and sponsorship involvement and at this year's meeting there was a full day for exhibitors for some 80 companies. Having publishers and content providers on the program as speakers helps to cross fertilize the attendees with important interaction between librarians and the companies that they depend upon and it gives new companies an opportunity to get feedback on their products and services. Another good idea is having sponsored sessions which are really an opportunity for companies to have a time period for more in-depth discussion of their product or service. Also in this category are the Lunch & Learn sessions which are another opportunity for a vendor to have a captive audience and an opportunity to educate attendees on a particular service. **EBSCO** and **ProQuest** are especially good at using this opportunity to advance their latest offering.

Generally when I attend library meetings most of the attendees are 50 plus years old but in the case of **ER&L** the average age appears to be about 35 or less which makes this meeting a special place for vendors to interact with a group of librarians that have enormous buying power and who seldom attend major professional meetings. There is an unusually strong level of energy flowing in the hallways

as you pass attendees going to the next session. The **ER&L** attendees are the very ones buying the eBooks, journal packages and the group more willing to experiment with new systems and services. Attendees that I talked to were excited about the opportunity that they have to share experiences with like-minded people who are actually performing similar work.

This year the opening keynote was given by **Anna Lauren Hoffman** a postdoctoral scholar from the School of Information at the **University of California, Berkeley** who spoke on the topic of *Data Violence: Dignity, Discrimination and Algorithmic Identity*. The talk was well received and what I took away was a greater understanding of the difficulties of transgender women trying to work with institutionalized systems that are designed poorly and only reflect traditional sexual orientation which deprives certain people the social bases of self-respect. I could not help but think that **ER&L** has come a long way since the standard "how my library handles e-materials" opening keynote given in 2006.

After the opening keynote the attendees are given a wide choice of over 100 programs and sessions divided into seven tracks: **Managing e-Resources & Licensing, Collection Development and Assessment, Organizational Strategies, External Relationships, User Experience & Promotion, Scholarly Communication & Library Publishing and Emerging Technology & Trends**. With 1,000 attendees and over 100 different programs it is hard to find a balance between the numbers of seats you will need for each session. In some situations there were overflow rooms set up and they helped to accommodate over booking a session. In general the rooms were sort of self-policing. In most cases many of us had three different sessions that they wanted to hear at the same time period so if one was full, you went on to your second choice.

My own choice of sessions included a few from the **Emerging Technologies, Collection Development, and Managing Resources** tracks. I was interested to hear the session "why doesn't everyone love reading eBooks." The session was presented by **Caroline Myrberg** from **Karolinska Institute** and her views were European in nature but not that much different from the research on eBook usage here in the U.S. Users hate DRM controls and many report navigation issues along with the problem of poor design when switching from smartphone, tablet, to laptop. The font and general design issues are perhaps universal. Many users like the printed book as a format and have difficulty using a mechanical device to replicate that experience. For the foreseeable future it appears we are going to have both printed books and eBooks.

My next session was another program from the **Emerging Technology** track titled "The Future of Discovery: Hyperknowledge" which featured a research application sold by **Yewno**. I am not sure what I was really seeing in that **Yewno**, [corp.yewno.com](http://corp.yewno.com), is supposed to be a next generation discovery system that uses semantically related concepts to build a human-like inference. The **Stonehill College** library is using **Yewno** as their Discovery service and it is unclear to me if the system has the scalability to perform all the discovery functions or if this is more of a prototype. The spokesman from **Yewno** was **Jason Chabak** and he was a very enthusiastic salesman and promoter of his service.

I then selected a Collection Development session on the **Charlotte Initiative for Permanent Acquisitions of eBooks by Academic Libraries** funded by **Mellon** and reported by **October Ivins**. It is great that **Mellon** has the resources to fund this type of project. Many organizations were involved in this two plus year program to consider how to sell publishers on the concept of making their eBooks a permanent acquisition to the collection. In the print world a library buys one book and shares it one person at a time, but when you buy or lease an eBook you buy one copy and would like to share it simultaneously with anyone or everyone that wants to use it. I may be oversimplifying the situation but most of the university press books except textbooks are often never used to start with so why worry about it. However college textbooks in my opinion should not be included in this category and most publishers will not want to sell one textbook to a campus and then have unlimited use on campus. The bookstore still makes some money selling textbooks. In fact, I am not sure that libraries should be provided textbooks as part of their service.

Continuing on the **Collection Development** tract there was an interesting session offered from two **BYU** staff on "Doing More with your Data." I was delighted to see a computer professional was involved in the data collecting and analysis phase. Evidence based decision making is an important tool in library management and too often decisions are based on emotion or personality or on who screams the loudest. I enjoyed the session and know that many libraries could arrange for better services by using data analysis of their usage data. I am not taking about Counter data.

The final session that I attended was from **Managing e-Resources** and was a case study on "Consortial Licensing: Lessons learned from SCEL C and A&M-SA Joint Vendor Negotiations." The biggest takeaway was, lay out the facts and ask nicely! SCEL C has long been my posterchild for a well-managed and financially viable consortium so I was not too surprised

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port students' access to library resources and services. It also reveals research projects including quantitative and qualitative studies that informed librarians' development of mobile services for students. In addition, the research illustrates the advantages of utilizing the mobile services provided by other libraries to guide the creation of similar projects at other institutions. For example, librarians at the **University of Illinois** conducted research to identify strategies for supporting students' iPad usage. In another study at this institution, librarians developed applications to enhance students' abilities to locate print materials on the shelf as well as scholarly research for an assignment.

Papers that discussed mobilizing libraries' services and resources underscore the need to incorporate responsive web design, conduct an environmental scan, partner with other entities in developing mobile services, employ commercial products in their creation, and promote the services to students. This literature also demonstrated the importance of providing students mobile access to the OPAC and databases as well as other library information. Still, the research pointed to the advantages of monitoring individuals' usage of mobile devices as well as the library's mobile services and resources to ensure the library remains relevant to their users.

The literature revealed opportunities for employing tablets to support a variety of library services. Still, librarians should consider utilizing other tools in conjunction with tablets for delivering mobile reference including LibGuides and statistical software for assessment. In addition, mobile reference projects benefit from including staff in their development and especially providing staff training, technical support, and promoting the program to students to foster successful outcomes.

Quick Response codes are important in enhancing students' awareness of library resources as well as supporting their access to material. A QR code LibGuide can further support students' use of these tools. In addition, the literature

pointed to the popularity of introducing students to QR codes through library treasure hunts.

Material discussing SMS supports its use for reference delivery at the institutional as well as national level. However, the literature noted the need for training to improve the outcome of these initiatives. Although there was limited research on the use of SMS for other library services, collaborations with database vendors may increase opportunities with this technology.

Papers that tracked librarians' creation of mobile applications demonstrate their value for improving students' access to library services and resources. In addition, these papers highlight the value of sharing the source code for the applications as well as publicizing their development at conferences and in journals.

Modern technologies offer librarians a wealth of opportunities for supporting users' access to library resources and services. In the millennium, it is especially critical that librarians consider the use of mobile devices in their adoption of technologies for the provision of library services and resources.

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paper, while others boxes the same size could have 20 books or more. They could not provide an explanation for why they did it that way, but we retained the boxes, so that we could recycle them for our summer weeding projects.

We are currently awaiting the final approval of the insurance adjuster. When the approval is provided, the university will transfer the money into our book object code. I believe I was "prepared for a purpose" when I attended the Disaster Preparedness workshop. I even contacted **Dr. Jessie Carney Smith**, the Library Dean at **Fisk** and **Annie Peterson**, our **Lyrasis** trainer, to share that I had been able to convert my just in time knowledge into actual experience. The event absolutely reinforced for me the thought that librarianship is a forever growing and evolving profession where you may need any skill set you can acquire. 🌳

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to hear their advice. On the other hand I know **Rick Burke** and his secret to managing a well-oiled machine often is much more than asking nicely.

I missed the closing keynote speaker, **Monica Bulger** but knowing **Bonnie** and her criteria for speakers I would expect nothing but the best. The **12th Annual Conference** is over and the attendees got to choose from many excellent programs and yes there were plenty of programs on Open Access, managing e-resources, emerging technologies and library publishing. There was something for everyone.

Next year we all return to Austin for the **13th Annual Conference** on March 4-7, 2018. I feel honored to have attended all but one of the **ER&L** meetings and I can say that they just keep getting better and better. A well organized, carefully planned and highly successful meeting produced by **Bonnie** and **Sandy Tijerina** and the many people who work so hard to make the meetings great each year. 🌳